

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1           1. A method for tracking status of an inventory shipment sent to  
2 a recipient, the method comprising:

3                 monitoring whether the recipient has transmitted an electronic  
4 acknowledgment of the status of the shipment; and

5                 automatically transmitting a message to the recipient requesting  
6 acknowledgment of receipt of inventory if the electronic acknowledgment is not  
7 transmitted by the recipient within a first predetermined amount of time.

1           2. The method of claim 1 wherein the monitoring step comprises  
2 monitoring whether the recipient has transmitted, via a terminal, the electronic  
3 acknowledgment to a host computer in communication with the terminal.

1           3. The method of claim 2 further comprising inhibiting operation  
2 of the terminal if the terminal does not print the message within a second,  
3 predetermined amount of time.

1           4. The method of claim 3 further comprising restoring operation  
2 of the terminal after the recipient causes the message to be printed by the terminal.

1           5. The method of claim 2 further comprising inhibiting operation  
2 of the terminal if the recipient does not respond to the message within a second,  
3 predetermined amount of time.

1           6. The method of claim 5 further comprising restoring operation  
2 of the terminal after the recipient responds to the message.

1           7. The method of claim 2 further comprising transmitting a notice  
2 to the terminal indicating that the shipment has been sent.

1           8. A method for tracking status of an inventory shipment sent to  
2 a recipient, the method comprising:

3 monitoring whether the recipient has transmitted, via a terminal, an  
4 electronic acknowledgment of the status of the shipment to a host computer in  
5 communication with the terminal;

6 automatically transmitting a message from the host computer to the  
7 terminal requesting acknowledgment of receipt of inventory if the recipient does not  
8 transmit the electronic acknowledgment within a first predetermined amount of time;

9 inhibiting operation of the terminal through the host computer if the  
10 terminal does not print the message within a second, predetermined amount of time;

11 automatically restoring operation of the terminal after the terminal  
12 prints the message if operation of the terminal has previously been inhibited for  
13 failure to print the message; and

14 automatically disabling the terminal through the host computer if the  
15 recipient does not respond to the message within a third, predetermined amount of  
16 time.

1 9. A method for tracking an inventory shipment sent to a  
2 recipient, the method comprising:

3 providing the recipient with a means to electronically communicate a  
4 status of the inventory shipment to a sender of the inventory shipment.

1 10. The method of claim 9 further comprising monitoring whether  
2 the recipient has communicated the status of the inventory shipment.

1 11. The method of claim 10 wherein the monitoring step comprises  
2 determining whether the recipient has communicated the status of the inventory  
3 shipment within a predetermined amount of time.

1 12. The method of claim 9 further comprising transmitting a notice  
2 to the recipient indicating that the shipment has been sent.

1 13. The method of claim 9 wherein the providing step comprises  
2 providing the recipient with a terminal for electronically communicating the status  
3 of the inventory shipment, and wherein the method further comprises inhibiting

4       operation of the terminal if the recipient does not communicate the status of the  
5       inventory shipment within a predetermined amount of time.

1                 14.      The method of claim 13 further comprising restoring operation  
2       of the terminal after the status of the inventory shipment has been communicated to  
3       the sender.

1                 15.      A system for tracking status of an inventory shipment sent to  
2       a recipient, the system comprising:

3                         a host computer for receiving an electronic acknowledgment of receipt  
4       of inventory from the recipient, the host computer being operable to automatically  
5       transmit a message to the recipient requesting acknowledgment of receipt of  
6       inventory if the electronic acknowledgment is not received within a first  
7       predetermined amount of time.

1                 16.      The system of claim 15 further comprising a terminal in  
2       communication with the host computer, the terminal being operable to transmit the  
3       electronic acknowledgment to the host computer and to receive the message from the  
4       host computer.

1                 17.      The system of claim 16 wherein the terminal is further  
2       operative to automatically inhibit operation of the terminal if the terminal is not  
3       instructed to print the message within a second, predetermined amount of time.

1                 18.      The system of claim 17 wherein the terminal is further  
2       operative to automatically restore operation of the terminal after the terminal is  
3       instructed to print the message.

1                 19.      The system of claim 16 wherein the host computer is further  
2       operable to inhibit operation of the terminal if the recipient does not print the  
3       message within a second, predetermined amount of time.

1                   20. The system of claim 19 wherein the host computer is further  
2 operable to restore operation of the terminal after the terminal prints the message.

1                   21. The system of claim 16 wherein the host computer is further  
2 operable to inhibit operation of the terminal if the recipient does not respond to the  
3 message within a second, predetermined amount of time.

1                   22. The system of claim 21 wherein the host computer is further  
2 operable to restore operation of the terminal after the recipient responds to the  
3 message.

1                   23. The system of claim 16 wherein the host computer is further  
2 operable to transmit a notice to the terminal indicating that the shipment has been  
3 sent.

1                   24. A system for tracking status of an inventory shipment sent to  
2 a recipient, the system comprising:

3                   a terminal for transmitting an electronic acknowledgment of receipt  
4 of inventory; and

5                   a host computer in communication with the terminal for receiving the  
6 electronic acknowledgment, the host computer being operable to transmit a message  
7 to the terminal requesting acknowledgment of receipt of inventory if the electronic  
8 acknowledgment is not received within a first, predetermined amount of time, the  
9 host computer further being operable to inhibit operation of the terminal if the  
10 terminal does not transmit the electronic acknowledgment within a second,  
11 predetermined amount of time.